

# Against the Grain

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## People Profile: Pam Cowart

Editor

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tal in its development and significance as a key component of the semantic Web.

### The Articles in This Issue

Collection development increasingly features digitization of hidden resources, unique collections, and rare materials. But digitization involves more than just scanning items in some Web-friendly format. It involves metadata, the key to making a digital collection easily searchable, compatible with local, consortial, and even global systems — and accessible into the future.

Contributors to this issue of *Against the Grain* emphasize the importance of coordinating with catalogers from the beginning of any digitization initiative. Doing so will save much backtracking and associated expense later. Thus collection decision makers and metadata catalogers/specialists should continue to forge strong relationships to bring the best product to the user.

Traditionally, collections librarians have chosen materials represented in the catalog by a MARC record. Raised on the ISBDs, firmly married to the content standard AACR2, and happily housed in your local ILS, MARC is a well established schema. Those collecting standard resources rarely had to wonder, "How will we provide access?" When selecting resources for digitization, however, collection development principles must be augmented by answers to a host of questions. How will digital assets be preserved? What schema will be used to describe them? What system will house them?

In this issue, we hope to answer these questions and others. First of all, **Jody Perkins** will give a conspectus of the essential matters that planners of a digital project need to take into consideration. Her excellent checklist includes sixteen vital points to consider when evaluating a collection. She discusses metadata design, choosing schemas and standards, and documenting decisions through the use of a data dictionary.

Reflecting further on schema selection, **Jeffrey Beall** enumerates twelve points of comparison to help one decide which of the many schemas available best suits one's digital project. He addresses such concerns as interoperability, granularity, proven success, and level of community or domain specificity.

Next, a pair of case studies: **James Bradley** discusses the efficacy, for a digital image collection, of **CONTENTdm** and **Dublin Core**; and **Jen Wolfe** and **Mark F. Anderson** review the difficulties and decision-making involved in opting for **DigiTools** and **METS** to provide access to a collection of science fiction fanzines. These case studies cover crosswalking, the viability of existing schemes, copyright issues, and decisions about the depth and extent of metadata needed.

Finally, **Arwen Hutt**, **Trish Rose-Sandler**, and **Bradley D. Westbrook** share one library community's successful approach to metadata preservation, a hot topic that the digital library

## against the grain people profile

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### Pam Cowart

**BORN & LIVED:** Born in Texas, I have lived in Louisiana, South Carolina, Iowa, Michigan, and Italy.

**EARLY LIFE:** Only child.

**FAMILY:** Recently married (formerly Pam Rebarcak), two stepchildren.

**EDUCATION:** BA Louisiana Tech University; MLS Louisiana State University; MPA Lamar University.

**FIRST JOB:** Lifeguard at a summer camp.

**FIRST PROFESSIONAL JOB:** Serials Cataloger at University of South Carolina.

**PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES:** Cataloging, Serials, Acquisitions, Technical Services, Social Sciences Bibliographer, and, as an Account Executive with LexisNexis, marketing, sales, and training. Served on numerous ALA and ALCTS Committees.

**IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO:** Wear out treadmills, go to movies and museums, travel (most recently to India).

**FAVORITE BOOKS:** *Lucky Jim*, *Motoring with Mohammed*, *A Severed Head*, *The Moviegoer*, *Kate Vaiden*.

**PET PEEVES/WHAT MAKES ME MAD:** Slow drivers in the passing lane.

**PHILOSOPHY:** Life is short — live it.

**HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS:** Librarians will do what they've always done — rise above the confusion and make sense of it all. 🌱



community must concern itself with, especially complex problems of long-term usability. In their article, they describe creation of a digital asset management system that, ingeniously wrapping **MODS** in **METS**, converts different types of metadata from many diverse projects into one interoperable and manageable schema.

These essays offer a wealth of insight into some of the most important electronic resources issues currently facing collection development. As we digitize our unique holdings, preserve items in jeopardy, or offer our most popular collections to the broadest user base, we would do well to keep in mind that the important decisions are made at the beginning of the collection digitization project and are mission critical to current and future plans for interoperability

Thanks to metadata, information has indeed escaped its containers. Deteriorating, hidden, and remote information resources are rediscovered, shared, and preserved. Muted voices, threatened cultures, whole histories that have long been buried find themselves at a global stage-center. Metadata makes it possible. 🌱

#### Endnotes

1. **Priscilla Caplan**, *Metadata Fundamentals for All Librarians* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2003).
2. The **National Science Digital Library**, NSDL Metadata Primer, <http://metamanager.comm.nsl.gov/overview2.html#what>.
3. **NISO Framework Advisory Group**, *A Framework of Guidance for Building Good Digital Collections*, 2nd ed. (2004): 27, <http://www.niso.org/framework/Framework2.pdf>.

## Planning for Metadata: the Quick Tour

by **Jody Perkins** (Metadata Librarian, Miami University Libraries, 306 King Library, Oxford, OH 45056; Phone: 513-529-0135; Fax: 513-529-1719)

When I first started in this field there weren't many articles on metadata in the library literature, much less on more practical

matters such as metadata design, planning and implementation. Since that time much  
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